

ness venture, or the probable yield of a flourishing crop, or the next dividend on the bank stock, there comes floating into the consciousness a stream of half heard, half understood talk about some gospel or other, floating in, confused and dim, and floating out, dim and confused. But, astonishment, what is this we hear, suddenly clanging in our ears and waking every faculty to its utmost tension of attention. Did such a thing ever happen before? Not a word we let slip, for the preacher is telling us that a noted geologist has just discovered a rich vein of gold running thru all the lands belonging to the congregation, and all they have to do to become immensely rich is to dig a few feet or a few hundred at a certain point. And he ventures furthermore to hope that when the Lord has so abundantly blessed them, they will endow Ashland College with a portion of this new and great abundance. Do they hear it? Do they hold on to it? Upon your life they do, every word with full weight and full force, excepting that little unessential reference to Ashland College. That is in danger of slipping out, but the other revelation, that rich gold vein, why if the preacher should repeat it next Sunday he would be laughed at. Do you suppose, Parson, that we need to be told the second time?

Now that is the "earnest heed" which the Apostle tells us should be bestowed upon spiritual matters. We know full well the meaning of it in matters of business, or of health, or when in sudden peril. We know, for example, with what earnest heed we listen to the cry of fire in the middle of the night. That is what is meant by the text, and it is just that kind of earnest heed that we need to practice, not only for the reasons already enumerated, but also lest we bewail lost opportunity. In regard to this, our last related theme, I will remark, that when we contemplate the history of mankind, when we analyze human character, when we look into our own experience, there is no single idea that so staggers the intellect as this idea of opportunity. The history of nations and the history of individuals is for the most part a record of opportunities lost, and opportunities improved; chiefly of opportunities lost. It is true in every department of human activity and human interest. Now the Gospel message is a message of opportunities, so numerous, so important, so vital, so vast that our comprehension is overwhelmed, just as it is overwhelmed when we stand face to face with the vast and mysterious ocean. Neglecting the "earnest heed," letting the words of the message slip, these opportunities vanish one by one, until at last *failure* is written in broad letters over all our life history, and we go down thru a barren and fruitless life to a cheerless grave, and an empty future. For us in vain were spread the radiant wings of Opportunity along the golden horizon of hope, since our eyes would not see, neither would our ears hear, when seeing and hearing would have

been life from the dead, and an eternal harvest in the world to come for the sowing of wisdom and love in this.

"HEAR THE CHURCH"

J. L. GILLIN

Not long ago it was my privilege to listen to a G. B. preacher in our town. In the course of his remarks he said it is the duty of church members to "hear the church," to submit to the church. Submission was made one of the first characteristics of a saintly character. As I listened I could not but reflect on that distorted scriptural phrase, "hear the church." My mind went back to the time of Luther and I remembered that the authorities of the Catholic church had told him that it was his duty to "hear the church."

I remembered John Knox in Scotland face to face with the church there. I heard the command from the high church dignitaries commanding him to "hear the church."

I saw John Wesley in England thundering against the worldliness of the established church and I heard the great men tell him to "hear the church" or be excommunicated.

My mind went back to Alexander Mack in Germany, who plead with a half-informed and half-reformed Protestantism for a return to the principles and practices of primitive Christianity, and I heard the ruling church there tell him it was his duty to "hear the church" rather than to assert his honest convictions.

As I reflected I wondered where the world would be spiritually now, had these men heard the church in these cases and sealed their lips upon the testimony of their own souls.

The injunction to "hear the church" is all right when applied to the occasion for which it was intended—the settlement of wrong doing between brothers. (See Matt. 18) But as a principle to be heeded whenever the church may choose to wield it, it is destructive of the very principles of Protestantism. If Protestant Christianity means anything it stands for the right of liberty to every individual conscience. It stands for the settlement of matters of conscience by honest conviction after intelligent discussion and fair investigation. But this "hear the church" method of settling doubtful points is Roman Catholic in its history and method. And, further, it produces the unthinking, unreasoning and unintelligent obedience of slaves who allow others to do their thinking for them.

It is right to "hear the church" provided the church is right. But who shall decide whether the church is right or not? The church itself? So says the Roman Catholic church and so says the German Baptist church. But Protestantism stands for the right of the individual to decide whether the church is right. That is what Luther's Reformation meant.

And if the church is wrong it is a positive

sin against conscience and against God to "hear the church." Then it is every man's duty to *refuse* to "hear the church."

A few years ago I heard a certain minister say that we ought to "hear the church," because the church is our mother and it is our duty to obey our mothers." The trouble with that logic is that it is not true that the church is our mother. The Bible nowhere teaches it, but the Roman Catholic and German Baptist churches do teach it. It is their doctrine, not God's.

Such methods of argument, such misinterpretation of God's sacred Word is unworthy of any body of people who claim to be Protestants. And any doctrine which needs such arguments to bolster it up and cause members to submit to it is certainly under suspicion that it has no better arguments at hand.

I admit that when people stand up and solemnly promise before baptism to be subject not only to God's Word, but to the rulings of Annual Meeting and to be obedient to the church, I admit that to them there can be only one of two courses honorably open, (1) either to absolutely submit to *all the rules of the church* or (2) *to get out of the church*. And if many of them do the first they will do what they have no faith in and thus sin (Rom. 14:23). And if they do the other they will offend their friends and relatives.

"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." Matt. 19:37.

LOOKING UPWARD. Psalm 5:3

L. W. DITCH

The limitations of our vision, when free from human hindrances, is in the direction of our look. If down, it is limited to the objects at our feet; if outward, we take into view a larger field. But vision is limited by our position and environment.

When we look up, then we shall find unbounded limitations. On wings of light our vision rises to sun and moon and stars, on and on thru space, vast but boundless. The heavens are a type of God. Majesty, omnipotence and immortality are written there. No man has studied the heavens and become an atheist, for the heavens declare the glory of God.

Look is a verb which expresses more than any other the aspirations and desires of the soul. If then we look down at material things only, how low our ambitions, how mean our desires. If outward to culture and moral rectitude no doubt there is a largeness of soul and more worthy desires, but like our vision they are limited to things of time. If we look up our souls are seeking after God and our desires are for high and holy purposes.

The upward look indicates a desire to be on the right side of things, a disposition to see the good in every circumstance of life.